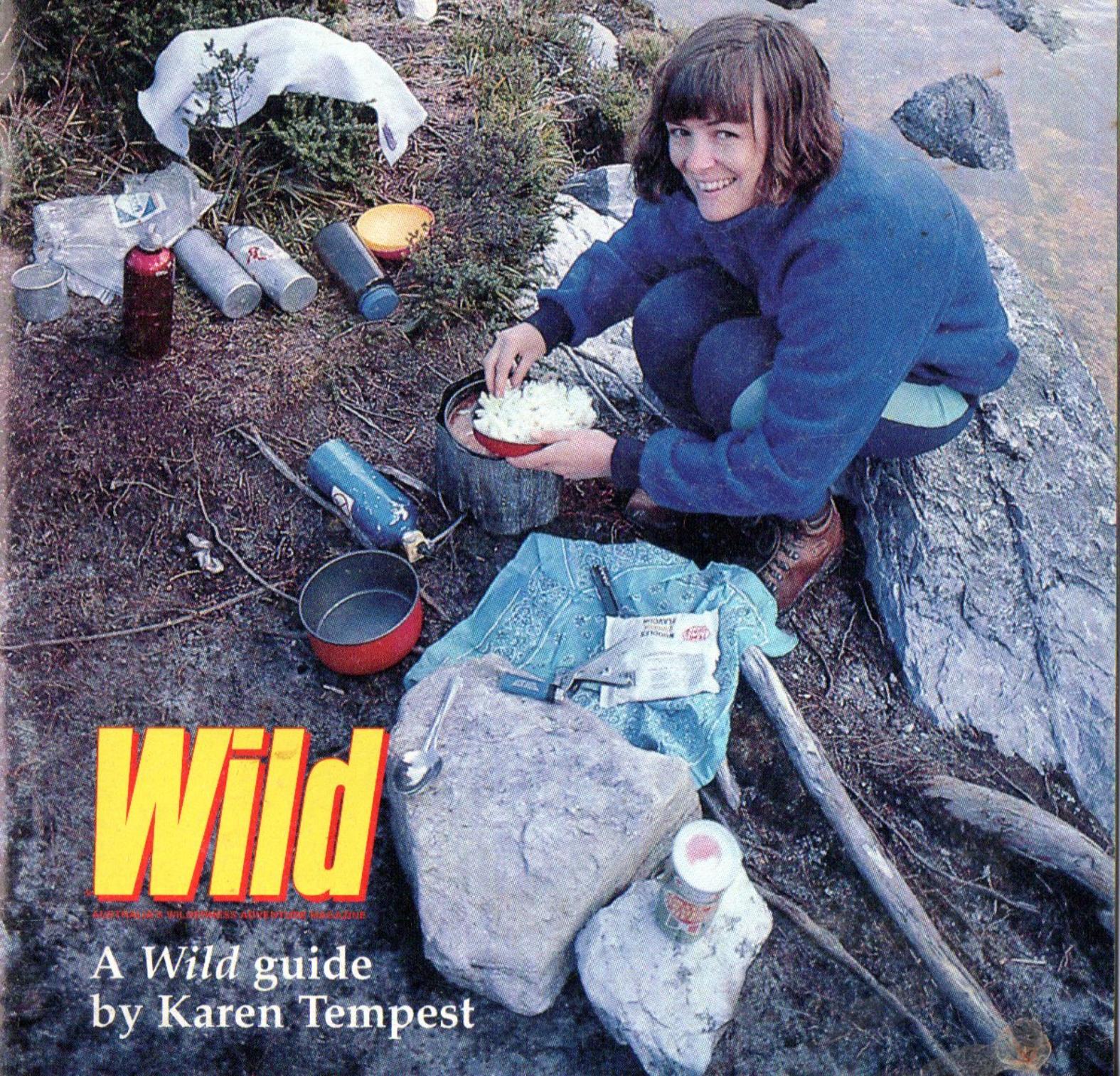


COOKING FOR THE BUSH

Easy and appetising
meals for walkers



Wild

AUSTRALIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

A Wild guide
by Karen Tempest

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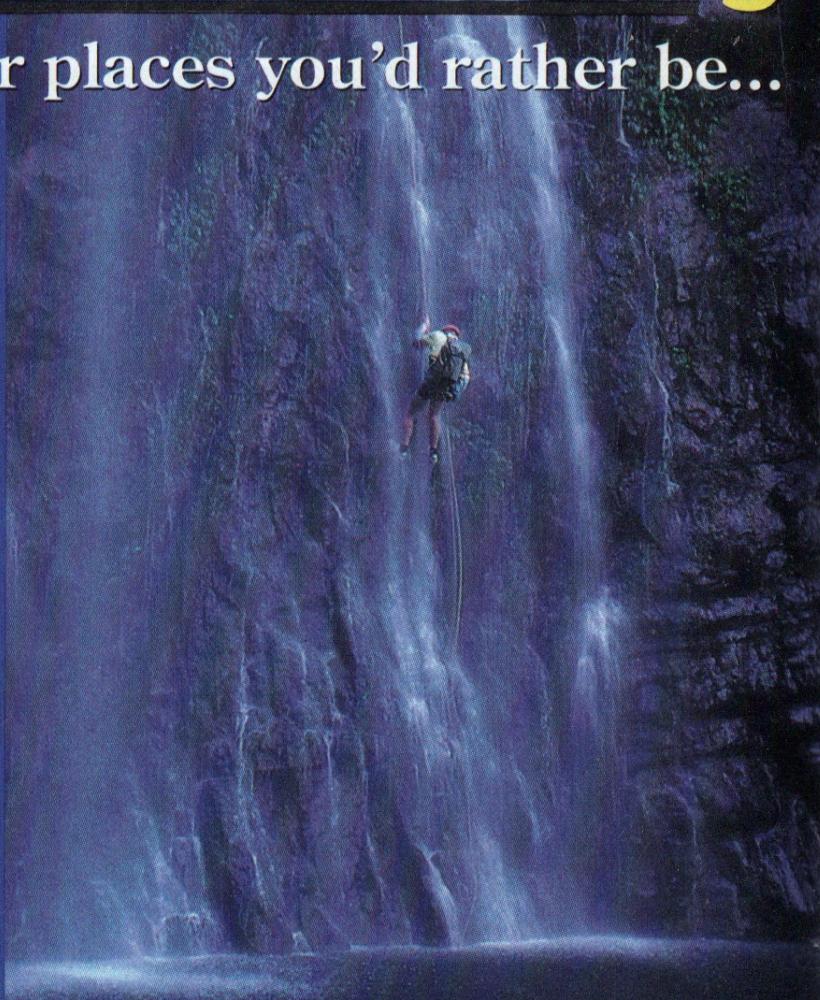
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MOUNTAIN DESIGNS
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COOKING FOR THE BUSH

Easy and appetising meals for walkers

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CLEANING UP

Cover Practising what she preaches; the author at work on the shore of Lake Oberon, Western Arthurs, South-west Tasmania. Glenn Tempest

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INTRODUCTION

Behind every great trip there is a great cook! When camping, we all look forward to meals. Just because you are away from home doesn't mean that your meals have to be bland and repetitive. The range and variety of ingredients that can be easily carried when you are walking means that gourmet creations are possible in even the remotest locations. With some planning and a little imagination you can eat just as well as, if not better than, you do at home.

I have often been asked by people who have never spent time in the outdoors: 'How can you go camping every weekend? How can you give up all the comforts of home for a night or weekend away in a tent?' I explain to them that they have got it all wrong and take great pleasure in watching their faces when I tell them of the meals I enjoy while I am away. Most people are astonished. I hope that after reading this booklet you, too, will amaze not only your friends and family but also yourself with what you can cook outdoors.

The recipes that follow are a selection I have tried and tested while away on trips. Many are based on meals I cook at home and have been adapted for the outdoors. In general, they are quick and easy to prepare and include a variety of fresh vegetables that carry well. You will notice that I have not included any recipes that require fresh meat. This is not because I am a vegetarian but because meat is a 'dodgy' item to pack and carry. It can too easily be contaminated with bacteria that, if eaten, will

make you very ill. Chicken and fish are particularly susceptible. Meat should be kept refrigerated at all times to prevent it from going off, something that you cannot guarantee on long trips. I have known people to carry frozen meat to prepare the first evening's meal but a couple of meals without meat will not hurt you and is much preferable to food poisoning.

It is intended that this book be a guide and an introduction to cooking meals while away. I hope that it will provide you with the basic knowledge you need to cook successfully in the bush. My selection is not a definitive list—there is plenty of scope to adapt not just these meals but also your own favourites. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

PREPARATION

Careful planning before any trip will save you time, money and messy mistakes. There is nothing worse than unpacking your rucksack at the end of a hard day's walking only to find that your night's dinner has leaked right through your gear.

Plan what you intend to eat while away. Work out the number of meals you'll need and what each will consist of, then write out an appropriate shopping list. By working out your menu in advance you can see at a glance exactly what you need to take or prepare. This will not only save you money but also allow you to determine how much food you need to take with you. There is no point in carrying a whole packet of muesli for only two breakfasts!

When planning your trip menu and shopping list remember that variety really is the spice of life. It may seem like a good idea at the time to buy that bulk bag of lentils but after five days of eating nothing but dhal your taste buds will be crying out for something—*anything*—as long it's not lentils. You do not want to wind up eating the same thing every night just for the lack of a little thought. Vary your meals. The longer your trip, the more important this is. When doing the shopping it is also important to include 'comfort items' on the list. No matter how well planned your menu and how many culinary delights are included, you will still crave something a bit luxurious or different. If you think about it we do this at home too. But while cravings can be satisfied easily enough at home with a well-stocked pantry or a quick trip to the shop, they can grow to enormous proportions when you are being energetic and are a long way from home. I tend to crave something savoury, while my husband has a sweet tooth and always appreciates the hidden block of chocolate pulled out of the pack at the end of a long, strenuous day. Fortunately, killing a craving usually does not take much—perhaps some salted peanuts or a chocolate bar—but you will find that this can lift your spirits and allow you to appreciate your surroundings all the more, not to mention encourage you to put your pack back on!

PACKING

The amount of effort you will need to put into your pre-trip packing of food will depend upon the type of trip you undertake. If you are off for the

weekend and intend to camp by the car it is not particularly crucial to consider weight and space. If, however, you are planning an extended trip and need to carry all your gear and food on your back for a number of days every gram is going to count.

When the car is at hand I don't worry too much about food packing. I tend to transfer items from my shelves and/or shopping bags to a box in the back of the car and back to the cupboards when I return. As we are away most weekends I have a food crate with essential items already pre-packed. Favourite herbs and spices, tea and coffee, spreads and condiments are ready to go. I just pack the fresh ingredients and the bulkier items before leaving.

Overnight or extended trips on foot call for more thought and the shedding of 'excess baggage'. This does not mean that you have to starve. You can still eat like royalty; you just have to put a little extra time and effort into your planning and packing.

It is a good idea to measure out dried ingredients and pack and seal them in zip-lock plastic bags. I always place each zip-lock bag inside another plastic- or freezer bag. This gives an extra layer of protection for carrying inside your pack. Another option is to place all the zip-lock bags inside a large, plastic carrier-bag or nylon stuff sack to contain any leaks and stop moisture from getting into the food. The plastic bag can then be used to take your rubbish home. When measuring out ingredients you can either make up individual meal serves in their own bags or combine a few nights' worth into one. This is up to

you and may depend on the menu you have planned. Condiments and spreads should be transferred into sealable plastic containers. Glass breaks too easily and also weighs far too much. Remove excess wrapping from items. You do not need to carry in packaging that you will only have to carry out again as rubbish. If you cannot work out what an unwrapped item is it will save a lot of bother later if you write on it with an ink pen or Texta for easy identification.

On longer trips you will have to limit the amount of fresh produce you carry. Plan to consume the perishable ingredients during the early part of the trip and cross over to dried substitutes later on. Remember that there are lots of dried substitutes that can replace fresh or liquid ingredients. There are also excellent curry and casserole bases available in both paste and powder forms. These are great: just add a few vegetables and serve with rice or pasta and you have a delicious and wholesome, not to mention appetising, meal.

For an even longer trip you could consider placing a food dump. This allows for a more varied range of foods than you could normally carry. Line a standard-sized kayaking drum with a bin liner and stock it with all the basics such as rice, pasta, tinned foods and cereals. Do not forget to throw in some goodies—chocolate, long-life cream or even a drop of port. (A word of warning though: never store garlic in your dump. No matter how well you seal it, garlic will get into everything. There is nothing worse than garlic-flavoured chocolate—believe me, I know from experience!) If you decide to use a food

dump make sure that it is well hidden from view and is clearly labelled with details of its contents, who intends to use it and of the date it is to be used. Food dumps are ideal if you intend to undertake an extended ski tour; they are best placed as close to the snow season as possible to reduce any possibility of the food going off. If the dump is placed in existing snow you may also like to include salamis and cheeses as the snow will help to preserve them. Bushwalkers using a food dump should avoid stashing perishable foods. Whenever and wherever you place the dump, you will have to retrieve it—and all the rubbish—at a later date.

Despite all your efforts and preparation even the best-laid plans can go astray. I always pack an emergency meal for those unexpected moments. Usually this consists of an instant rice or pasta meal. Many varieties of both are available from most supermarkets. It is a good idea for you to test some at home to find out which ones you like and which are the simplest to prepare. You should look for something that is easy to whip up and to which you just have to add water.

EQUIPMENT

Unless you go to special lengths to dispense with food that requires cooking (see *Wild Ideas*, *Wild* no 54) you are obviously going to need a source of heat to cook your food. This will either be a stove or an open fire.

Open fires are wonderful: not only can you cook with them but you can sit around them for warmth and comfort. Fires are the focal point of a

campsite. You can while away the hours conversing with friends around a good campfire, replete after a wonderful meal. If you do have a campfire there are a few things that you must keep in mind. First, position the fire carefully away from all vegetation. Secondly, remember that the surrounding area should be cleared of all leaves and debris and the woodpile should be placed well away from the fire. Thirdly, never leave the fire unattended. When leaving the campsite make sure that the fire is completely out. (Douse it with water or sand.)

Campfires are not always practical. Days of total fire-ban prohibit their use. Fires may be banned in certain areas and fuel for fires may be scarce. Or the weather may be so wet and miserable that you can't get a fire going. Stoves are your alternative.

Stoves are generally easier to cook with than fires as you can control the heat level. For car camping a gas cylinder with a cooking ring or rings is the ideal solution and can be just like having your stove from home. I have whipped up many a gourmet delight using only a single gas burner. However, if you have to carry the stove with you in a pack you will need something smaller and more portable.

There are many portable stoves on the market (see the Gear Survey in this issue of *Wild*, no 58), most of which fall into the following three categories: methylated spirit burners such as the Trangia and the Sigg Traveller; the multifuel stoves such as the MSR X-GK and Whisperlite and the Sigg Fire-Jet; and gas stoves such as the Camping Gaz range. For more

information on the pros and cons of each type of stove see *Wild Ideas* in *Wild* no 42. Whichever stove you choose it is up to you, the cook, to familiarise yourself with it. Once you have mastered it you will be able to cook up a storm.

Always remember to check your stove before a long trip to make sure that it is in working order. Include a repair kit and other necessary bits and pieces, such as prickers, and carry enough fuel to see you through. If going on a ski tour bear in mind that you will have to melt snow before you can boil water—this will consume a lot of fuel. Each member of the party should carry a lighter, and a spare should be carried with the stove kit. A wind-shield is useful as it will speed up cooking time and help to conserve fuel. If bad weather forces you to cook inside the tent keep the stove in the vestibule—well away from the tent walls—and make sure that there is adequate ventilation.

Now that you have the heat source sorted out in what are you going to cook your gourmet creations? A couple of billies or pots are standard. These can be used on the stove or the fire. If possible, one should be larger than the other for ease of carrying and versatility in cooking. The smaller one can be placed inside the larger when travelling. Preferably both billies should have lids. This will help to reduce cooking time and keep food warm if you are waiting for another dish to cook. Some billies come with lids that are flat and act as a frying-pan and/or plate. These are handy as they can act as a two-in-one cooking utensil and it is sometimes an advantage to have a flat surface on

which to work. Unless you have no feeling in your fingers you will need billy grips. These allow you to grip the sides of the billy and lift it from the heat without burning yourself. They are also useful for steadyng a pot while stirring it.

Jaffle irons are ideal for an open fire. They come in single or double versions and with one jaffle iron you could theoretically cook all your meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert. The only ingredients you need are a loaf of bread and anything else that comes to hand. A toasting fork or a portable toaster is handy for toasting bread or crumpets. I often use a wok on the open fire instead of a billy. Stir-frying is a great alternative to stewing and boiling and allows you to cook for larger groups. Be careful not to knock over the billy or wok and avoid kicking embers into it. Camp ovens can be used for a variety of dishes and aluminium foil is great for wrapping vegetables for baking. A set of tongs is also handy for retrieving those baked spuds from the coals.

If using an open fire you will need to push some of the coals over to one side and flatten them down to provide a stable cooking area. Coals supply the best source of heat and cook evenly; unlike flames, which tend to burn. A small, compact fire with a good base of coals makes the best cooking fire. Often, however, a fire will be filling the additional role of warming cold toes, fingers or whole bushwalkers and the long-suffering chef will be constantly fighting to keep it from overwhelming the food. Obviously the bigger the fire the hotter it is, so keep an eye on your food to guard against it burning.

You will also need a utensil for eating and a mug for drinking. I prefer to use a bowl rather than a plate. This will hold breakfast cereals, soups and desserts as well as a main course. Both bowl and mug should be plastic. Don't forget a knife, fork and spoon. (Lightweight plastic and Lexan versions of these are available.) A sharp knife is essential and you may find a small chopping surface and a wooden spoon useful.

The size and number of utensils will depend upon how many people you are cooking for. Over the years I have refined my cooking to cover two generous serves. They can be stretched to three if needed. Bear in mind that I have one very hungry mouth to feed (and it's not mine!) The recipes, unless otherwise stated, serve two-three people.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Soak pulses and rice to shorten cooking time—for a minimum of half an hour. Longer for the beans if you have time. This may at first seem like a pain, but if you start them soaking as soon as you begin to think about dinner they will be done by the time you've sorted out the other ingredients, utensils and the stove or fire.
- Carry a selection of herbs; they are terrific for adding flavour to meals and take up very little space.
- Use sturdy, airtight containers such as those made by Nalgene to carry liquids or sauces. They are available in a large range of sizes, are very tough, cheap and, most importantly, don't leak.

- Carry a Swiss Army knife. It not only has a sharp blade but a range of other useful tools.
- Soup and stock cubes are excellent for replacing stock in recipes. They can also make up a broth to drink in an emergency.
- Carry some oil in a small, sealable plastic bottle. Oil keeps better than butter or margarine and only a small amount is needed for cooking. The recipes that follow assume that you are carrying some.
- Substitute dried ingredients for liquid ones wherever possible.
- A good range of dried vegetables is available. These can substitute for fresh vegetables on longer trips. Remember to soak them for at least half an hour before use—they will cook faster and taste juicier.
- You can pre-mix ingredients for some meals before you leave. This saves space when carrying and reduces the cooking time.
- When making up milk powder you will get better results if you put the powder and water into a container and shake to mix—this prevents lumps.
- Try using couscous or bourghal instead of rice or pasta. Both are quick to cook—just add boiling water and stand for ten minutes. The grains are pre-cooked and absorb the water and expand to provide a nutritious and unusual base for a meal.
- Mung beans, red lentils and black-eyed beans all have a short cooking time and do not require soaking. If you have the time I would still suggest soaking them for at least half an hour; this helps to reduce the cooking time further, thereby saving fuel, as the beans soften a little in the water.
- Add a dash of oil to the water when cooking pasta. This helps to stop it from sticking.
- Mountain bread and sorj bread keep longer than normal bread and are handy for carrying on long trips. Even when the bread becomes a little too dry it is a great accompaniment to dips.
- Use a rice that is quick to cook. Short-grained rice, basmati and jasmin varieties all cook quickly, especially if soaked first.
- When cooking rice, soak it in twice its volume of water (for example, soak one cup of rice in two cups of water) for half an hour. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat and simmer until all the water has been absorbed. Allow to stand for five minutes and stir through with a fork before serving.
- Carry a small container of Parmesan cheese. It tastes great on pasta and can be added to all sorts of dishes for a bit of extra flavour and zest.
- If your recipe calls for wine, both red and white varieties are available in convenient, two-glass sachets—enough for the meal (and then some!). Pack them in something crush- or leak-proof.
- If you are a coffee addict and appreciate a fresh cup of coffee in the morning—or at any time, for that matter—it is now possible to buy individual coffee bags. This allows you to carry exactly the

number of doses you will need on your trip without excess weight!

GLOSSARY

Atta flour. Also known as chappati flour. Available from Asian grocers and most supermarkets.

Black-eyed beans. Cream-coloured beans with a distinctive black spot. Have a short cooking-time without soaking. Slightly smoky flavour. Also known as black-eyed pea.

Bourghal wheat. A grain product made by parboiling and drying whole wheat kernels and then cracking them. Popular in Middle Eastern cooking. It has a chewy texture and tastes slightly nutty.

Couscous. A fine cereal made from semolina. Good as a substitute for rice.

Garam masala. A blend of spices popular in Indian cooking.

Julienne. Vegetables cut into thin strips about five centimetres long. The thin strips will cook evenly.

Lentils. Available in red and brown, they are high in protein and carbohydrates. The red variety cooks quickly without soaking.

Mountain bread. Flat, unleavened bread.

Mung beans. Small, roundish, dark-olive beans. Easy to digest, high in protein and quick to cook.

Polenta. Ground corn (maize). Also known as cornmeal or maizemeal.

Pulses. Generic term for dried beans.

Sorj bread. Flat, unleavened bread.

Zest (of lemon). Grated rind of the lemon.

ABBREVIATIONS

cm = centimetre; g = grams;

tbsp = tablespoon; tsp = teaspoon

BREAKFAST

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Not only are you breaking your fast from the night before but you are fuelling your body for the coming day. If you have the opportunity to treat yourself to a cooked breakfast, make the most of it. Choose from a selection of bacon, eggs, mushrooms, tomatoes, baked beans and onions. Serve with toast. This will get you right through the day.

PORRIDGE

1 cup water

1/2 cup dried fruit, chopped

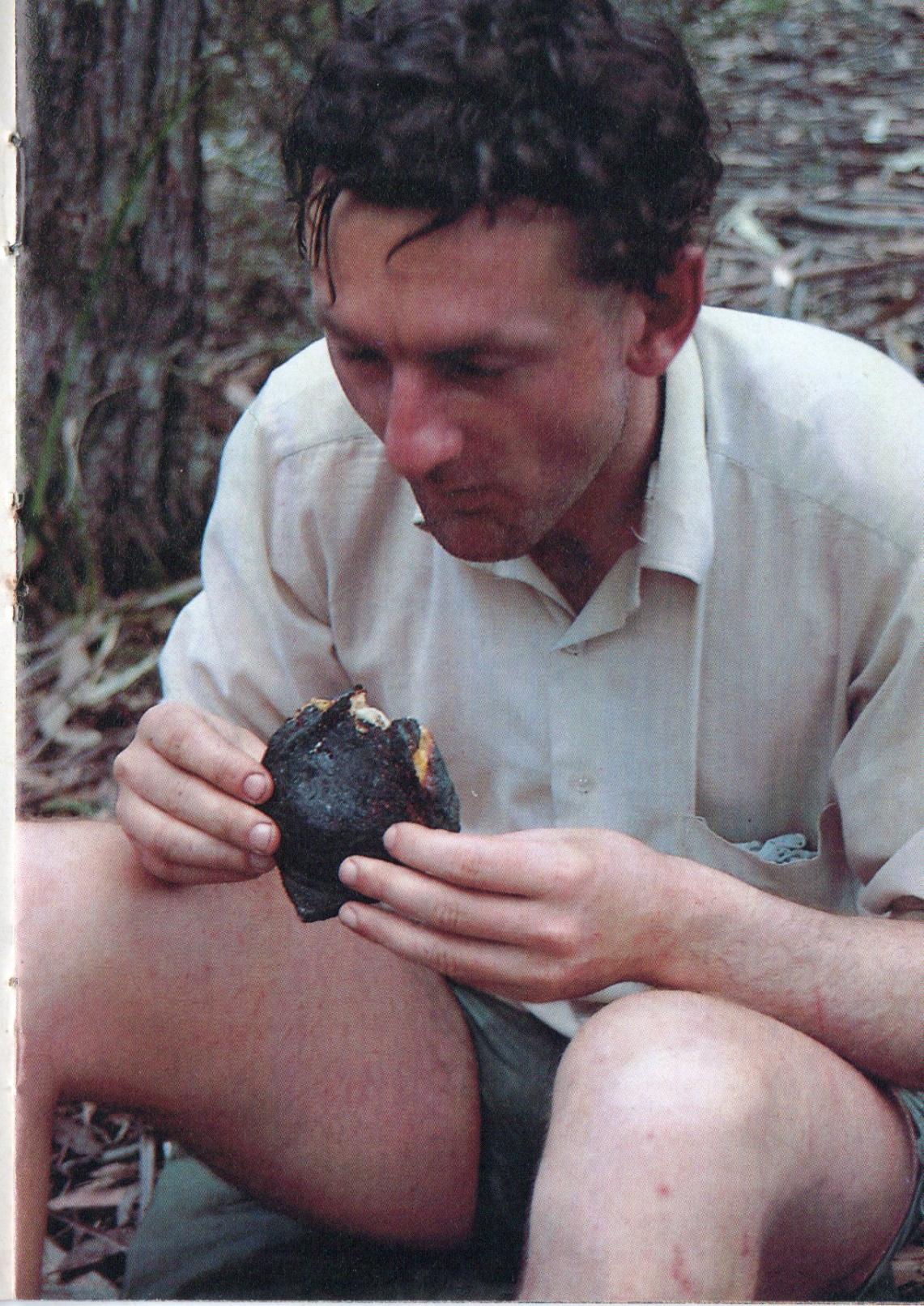
1 cup rolled oats

1 banana or apple (or any fresh fruit you desire), sliced

Bring water to the boil, add dried fruit and continue to boil for a few minutes. Add oats, turn down heat and simmer until oats are nearly cooked. Stir occasionally. Add fresh fruit and a little more water if necessary and simmer for a few more minutes until the fresh fruit is heated through.

Serve with sugar, honey, milk or a combination of these.

'Simply delicious!' David Noble



MUESLI

1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup golden syrup
1 tbsp vanilla essence
1/4 cup milk powder
2 tbsp nutritional yeast
zest of 1 lemon
1 cup wheat germ
750 g rolled oats
1 cup raw cashews
500 g mixed dried fruit
250 g dried pineapple
250 g dried pawpaw
250 g slivered almonds or
chopped walnuts
250 g sunflower seeds or
pine nuts

Heat oil, honey and golden syrup in large pot until thin. Remove from heat. Stir in one at a time: vanilla, milk powder, yeast, lemon zest, wheat germ, oats and cashews. Spread the mixture on to two large, ungreased biscuit trays and bake at 120°C for one-and-a-half to two hours, stirring occasionally. Allow to cool, then stir in remaining ingredients. Store in an airtight container.

Tip

Obviously this should be prepared before you leave. This muesli can be eaten for breakfast as cereal or can be nibbled along the track.

OMELETTE

1-2 eggs
a little milk or water
fillings—choose from grated
cheese, sliced tomato,
mushrooms, salami, ham,
capsicum, zucchini, or
others.

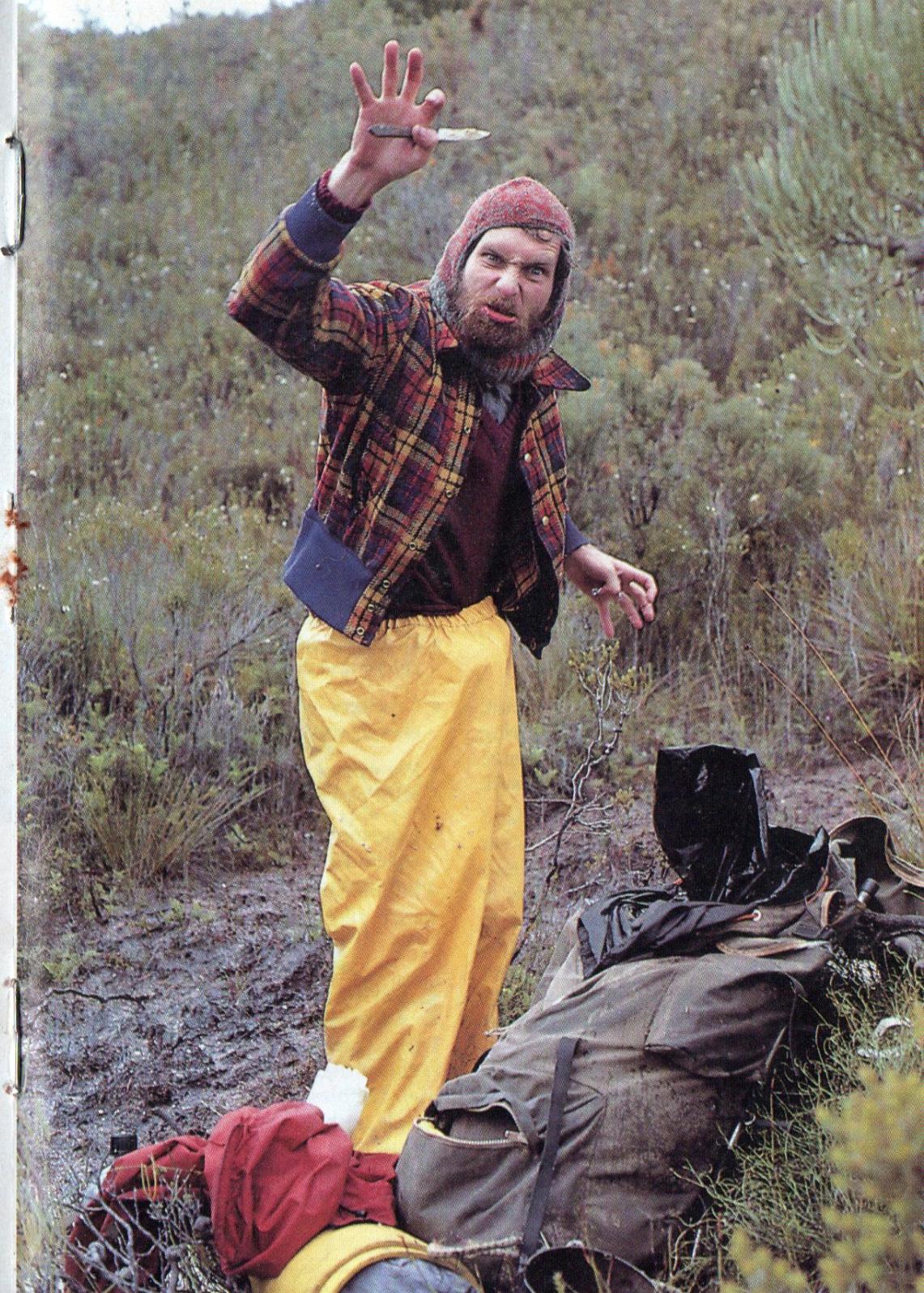
Beat the eggs and milk/water. Heat a little oil and pour mixture into it. Cook for a few minutes until base is cooked. Sprinkle the filling of your choice over half the base and fold the other half over. Cook a few minutes longer to allow the filling to heat through.

JAFFLES

2 slices of bread
margarine
fillings—choose from egg,
bacon (it pays to pre-cook
both of these ingredients in
the jaffle iron before turning
them on to the bread), cheese,
tomato, onion, baked beans,
salami, ham, peanut butter,
tomato paste, Vegemite.
Condiments such as peanut
butter and tomato paste are
great as they melt and form a
sauce. You can put anything
you like in a jaffle. The secret
is to slice the ingredients
thinly and evenly.

Butter two slices of bread. Place the buttered sides on to the jaffle iron. Place filling of your choice on the unbuttered side, close the iron and place on the hot coals. Turn over after a few minutes. How long you cook each side will depend on the heat of the fire. Be careful when checking jaffles as the bread can stick to the iron and tear. Jaffles should be evenly browned on both sides. Stand for a few minutes to allow filling to cool a little and be careful of scalding ingredients bursting out at your first bite!

The Maître d' prepares to serve the speciality of the house. Janusz Molinski



PANCAKES

1 cup self-raising flour, sifted
1/4 cup sugar
1 cup milk

Stir flour and sugar together. Make a well in the centre and stir in milk slowly and gradually to avoid lumps. Heat a little oil in a pan and pour enough mixture for one pancake into pan. Cook on both sides until golden brown. Serve with lemon and sugar, jam, honey or fresh fruits.

or

Use the pancake mix available in small plastic containers from the supermarket. Just add water and shake (follow the instructions on back of bottle). Heat the pan, add a little oil and pour enough for one pancake. Flip after a few minutes and cook other side. Serve as above.

STEWED FRUIT

Slice apples, pears or any stoned fruit. Add a little water and sugar and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until fruit is soft.

Add a little cinnamon, nutmeg and sultanas to the simmering fruit—or even a little rum or brandy. If fresh fruit is unavailable, soak a packet of dried fruit salad in enough water to cover it and allow to stand for one hour. Bring to the boil and simmer until soft. There is no need to add any sugar as the dried fruit is sweet enough on its own.

LUNCH

For lunch you should try to stop to make a brew, a cup of soup or some instant noodles, particularly in

poor weather. A handful of scroggin or an apple is not enough to get you through from breakfast to dinner when your body is working hard. If you don't have a substantial lunch be prepared for a big dip in your energy—and enjoyment—levels during the afternoon. Lunch on our trips is usually on the move so I try to keep it simple but interesting. Choose from the following or create your own.

- Pita bread pockets filled with cream cheese and dried fruits.
- Mountain bread or sorj bread spread with peanut butter, tomato, capsicum, salami, cheese, honey and avocado, then rolled. (I know this sounds gross but it tastes great and is even better when heated.)
- Crackers with cheese and sun-dried tomatoes.
- Dips and crackers with raw carrot, celery and capsicum.
- Crackers with sardines or tuna, cheese, tomato and capsicum.
- Pre-mixed tuna and mayonnaise with pita bread pockets.
- Gourmet selection of cheese, olives, artichoke hearts, salami, sun-dried tomatoes and fresh rolls or crackers.

NIBBLES

Having something to nibble on during the day is important. Treats are essential on any trip. Without them the day can become a trial. Nibbles can include something simple such as a piece of fresh fruit, a biscuit or a chocolate bar, or a more elaborate affair that you have baked before leaving home and packed for

just the right occasion. On our trips we always carry a block of chocolate, a packet of salted nuts, a packet of sweet biscuits and, on longer trips, popping corn. This weighs next to nothing dry but if you heat a little oil in a pot with a lid and add the corn, in moments you will have a pot full of hot popcorn!

Another essential for the track is scroggin. This is a mixture of nuts, dried fruit, sweets and chocolate. You can add almost anything you like to a scroggin mix. The sweets and chocolate will give you a quick hit of sugar, the dried fruit has slower-release sugars, while the nuts provide protein. Scroggin pickers—who fish out the choice nibbles (usually the chocolate and jelly-beans) leaving a bag full of nuts—are the bane of any bushwalking party and should be put on tent-pitching duty until they mend their ways!

SCROGGIN

Mix together: nuts (peanuts, almonds, cashews), dried fruit (pawpaw, apricots, apples, sultanas, currants), chopped dates, Smarties or M&Ms, honeycomb, squares of plain and milk chocolate, licorice bullets, jelly-babies or jelly-beans.

DINNER

This is the meal you have waited for all day. After a long day of strenuous exercise you need something warm and sustaining inside you. The following is a selection of meals that are simple to prepare and quick to cook.

TOMATO AND LENTIL SOUP

1 onion, chopped
1 carrot, sliced
1 packet tomato soup
4 cups (1 litre) water
1/2 cup red lentils
2 tbsp lemon juice

Heat a little oil and fry onion and carrot. Cook until onion is soft. Add soup, water and lentils. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 10–15 minutes or until lentils are soft. Stir in juice just before serving. (Serves four.)

Tip

The juice can be omitted or you can substitute a lime for the lemon.

HEARTY MUNG BEAN SOUP

1 tsp cumin
1 tsp coriander
1 small onion, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery stick, chopped
1 small red capsicum, chopped
2 tomatoes, chopped
2 vegetable stock cubes
3 cups water
1/2 cup mung beans

Soak beans for at least half an hour. Drain.

Fry onion and spices in a little oil for three minutes. Add carrot, celery, tomatoes, stock cubes, water and mung beans. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for 10–15 minutes or until beans are cooked.

Tip

Substitute tomato paste or Tomato Magic for the fresh tomatoes. The

spices can be mixed beforehand and carried blended. Red lentils or black-eyed beans can be substituted for the mung beans.

DHAL

- 1 cup red lentils
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin
- 3 cups water
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp dried chilli

Soak lentils for at least half an hour. Drain.

Bring to the boil: water, lentils, turmeric and cumin. Cover and simmer for ten minutes or until lentils are cooked. In a little oil, fry onion, garlic, chilli and garam masala until onion is soft. Add to lentils and mix well.

Serve with rice and chappatis.

MASALA BHAJI (VEGETABLE CURRY)

- 1 cup cauliflower florets
- 1 large potato, diced
- 1/4 cup dried peas
- 1 tbsp Indian curry paste
- 1/4 cup water
- pinch of sugar

Heat a little oil and cook potatoes for five minutes, stirring constantly. Add cauliflower and peas and cook for a further three minutes. Add the curry paste, sugar and water. Cover and cook for eight-ten minutes. Add a little more water if necessary.

Serve with rice and chappatis or both.

Tip

Soak dried peas for at least half an hour first. This dish tastes great if you sprinkle a little desiccated coconut on it before serving. The curry paste can be any that takes your fancy. I prefer medium-to-hot ones but it's up to you. An excellent selection of Indian curry pastes is available from the supermarket or from Asian grocers. (The latter are more fun.) Sample a few to discover the taste that suits you. You could also substitute a curry powder for the paste.

THAI VEGETABLE CURRY

- 1 onion, chopped chunky
- 1 tbsp Thai curry paste
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 carrot, sliced
- 1 celery stick, sliced
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1 cup water

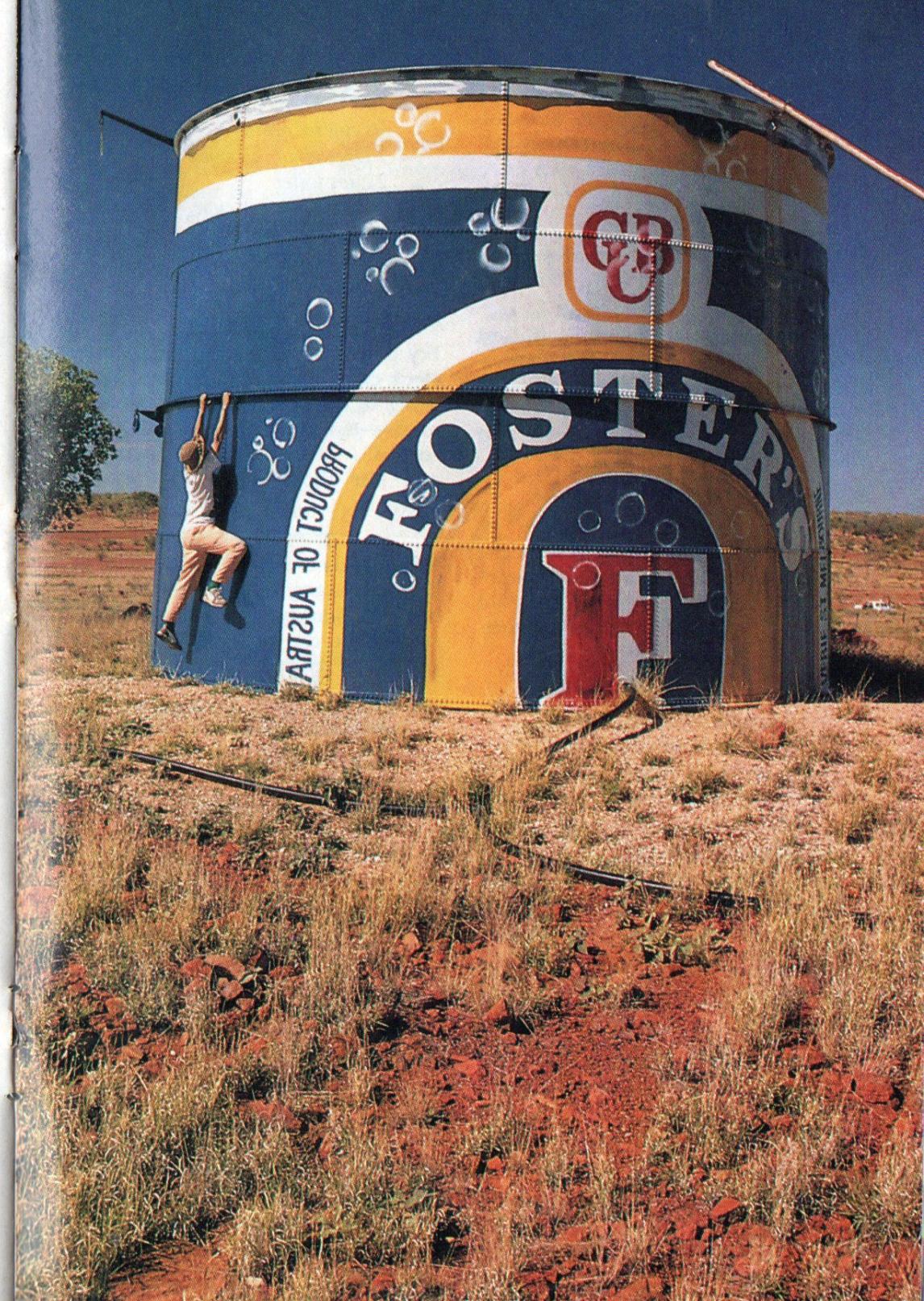
Fry onion in a little oil until soft. Add paste and fry to release the spices that really make this dish. Add coconut milk, water and vegetables. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer until vegetables are cooked.

Serve with rice.

Tip

Substitute Thai curry powder for the paste and powdered coconut milk for the liquid. Any combination of vegetables can be used. Dice the potato into small pieces to shorten cooking time.

'Just a single tinny won't do any harm.'
Bill Bachman



CREOLE CURRY

1 large onion, chopped
chunky
2 potatoes, diced
handful of green beans
1 tbsp cajun/creole curry
paste
1 cup water
handful of sultanas

Fry onion in a little oil until soft. Add curry paste and stir to release spices. Add water and potatoes and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for ten minutes. Add beans and sultanas and simmer for a few minutes more.

Serve with couscous.

Tip

Substitute dried beans or peas for the fresh beans. I also like to add pumpkin or sweet potato to this recipe. Add them at the same time as the potatoes.

CHILLI BEANS

2/3 cup black-eyed beans
1 onion, chopped
1 capsicum, chopped
1 tbsp tomato paste
1–2 tsp chilli powder
(depending on taste)
1/2 cup water

Soak beans for half an hour or longer. Drain.

Fry onion and capsicum in a little oil until onion is soft. Stir in chilli powder and tomato paste. Add beans and water. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for ten minutes or until beans are soft.

Serve with rice or couscous.

Tip

The beans can be substituted with red lentils or mung beans.

LENTIL CASSEROLE

2/3 cup red lentils
1 large onion, chopped
2 cups water
1 vegetable stock cube
1 tbsp tomato paste
1/2 cup breadcrumbs
1 cup grated cheese

Soak lentils for half an hour. Drain.

Fry onions in a little oil. Add water, stock cube, lentils and tomato paste. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for five–ten minutes or until lentils are cooked. Add cheese and breadcrumbs and stir thoroughly until heated through.

Tip

Mix the cheese and breadcrumbs at home and carry blended in a zip-lock bag. On a longer trip the onion and stock cube can be substituted by a packet of French onion soup.

VEGETABLE PASTA

1 onion, chopped
1 small capsicum, chopped
1 celery stick, chopped
1 small zucchini, chopped
1 tin of tomatoes, chopped
1 tbsp tomato paste
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup red wine
1/2 tsp basil
1/2 tsp marjoram
1/2 tsp thyme
1/2 tsp oregano
black pepper to taste

Fry the onion, capsicum, celery and zucchini in a little oil until onion is soft. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, wine and water. Stir thoroughly. Add the herbs and pepper. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for ten minutes.

Serve with pasta. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Tip

Tinned tomatoes can be substituted with extra tomato paste and water. Red wine can be omitted (though I believe it adds extra flavour)—add more water instead. The herbs can be pre-mixed and carried blended.

MICHAEL'S PASTA

1 clove garlic, chopped
1 large capsicum (or
preferably a mix of red and
green capsicums), chopped
1/2 cup of peas
4 slices salami, chopped
(pepper-coated is best)
1/2 cup chopped parsley
Parmesan cheese
2 serves of pasta

Cook the pasta and set aside.

Fry garlic and capsicum in plenty of oil until soft. Add salami and peas. Cook for a few minutes. Add pasta and a little more oil and toss thoroughly. Lastly, add the parsley and toss well.

Serve sprinkled with grated Parmesan cheese.

Tip

You need to be liberal with the oil in this recipe. Fresh parsley works best but dried parsley can be substituted.

ASIAN VEGETABLES

1 carrot
1 zucchini
2 sticks of celery
2 tsp ground ginger
1/2 cup spring onions,
chopped
1 tsp brown sugar

2 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp sesame seeds

Julienne carrot, zucchini and celery. Fry onions and ginger in a little oil. Add the vegetables and stir-fry for a few minutes. Add sugar, soy and seeds. Toss.

Serve with rice.

Tip

Top and tail the spring onions before leaving home—they are much easier to carry this way and will keep better. You can substitute the spring onions with a small onion if you like.

CHEESY RISOTTO

1 leek, sliced
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 red capsicum, chopped
2 sticks of celery, chopped
1 cup quick-cooking rice
1 tin of tomatoes, chopped
1/2 cup wine (red or white)
1 vegetable stock cube
1 1/2 cups water
1 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp paprika
1/2 cup grated cheese

Fry the leek, garlic, capsicum and celery in a little oil for two minutes. Add rice and cook for one minute making sure that the rice is well coated with mixture. Add tomatoes, stock cube, water, wine, tomato paste and paprika. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for ten minutes or until rice is cooked. Stir occasionally. Stir in cheese and simmer until heated through and all the liquid is absorbed.

Tip

Substitute the tin of tomatoes with an extra tablespoon of tomato paste and an extra quarter of a cup of water. The

wine is optional—add half a cup of water instead.

SWEET POTATO AND SILVER BEET RISOTTO

- 1 medium-sized sweet potato, chopped
- 1 leek, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 cup quick-cooking rice
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 vegetable stock cube
- 3 cups water
- 6 leaves silver beet, chopped
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

Cook the sweet potato and mash. Set aside.

Fry leek and garlic in a little oil until soft. Add rice, then stir until combined. Add wine and simmer until almost all the wine has evaporated. Stir in stock cube and water. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until water is absorbed and rice is cooked. Add silver beet, then stir until wilted. Add mashed sweet potato and cheese. Stir until heated through.

Tip

Pumpkin can be substituted for sweet potato. If you can bear it, the wine can be exchanged for half a cup of water. This dish is best eaten early in the trip as the silver beet doesn't carry very well. Cabbage can be substituted for the silver beet. (You will need to add the cabbage with the water and stock cube.)

SPICED RICE

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green or red chilli, chopped
- 1 cm cube fresh ginger,

- chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp coriander
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp cloves
- 4 cardamom pods (use the seeds only)
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 cups quick-cooking rice
- 3 cups water

Fry onions, chilli and ginger in a little oil until onion softens. Add garlic and spices. Cook for one minute, stirring all the time. Add rice and water and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer undisturbed until all the water is absorbed (10–15 minutes).

Let stand for five minutes before serving. (Serves four.)

Tip

A tablespoon of peanut butter and/or a teaspoon of Vegemite or tomato paste can be added with the spices for a slightly different flavour. Soak the rice first, then drain to shorten cooking time. For convenience, the ground spices can be mixed at home and carried together.

MUSHROOM PILAFF

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 cm cube fresh ginger, chopped
- 1 tsp coriander
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp paprika
- 3 cardamom pods
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/4 cm stick cinnamon
- 1 tbsp sultanas or raisins
- 200 g mushrooms, sliced

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup quick-cooking rice

Fry onion in a little oil until it softens. Add garlic, ginger, all the spices and the sultanas or raisins. Stir vigorously for one minute, then add water, rice and mushrooms. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer until water is absorbed and rice is tender (ten minutes). Allow to stand for a few minutes, then stir gently with a fork and serve.

CHAPPATIS

- 1/2 cup atta flour
- 1 tsp oil
- water

Mix enough water with the flour and oil to form a soft dough. Knead until firm and set aside for 30 minutes. Roll into a sausage, fold in half and roll into a sausage with the diameter of a 50 cent piece. Pull off teaspoon-sized pieces and roll out on flat, floured surface until thin.

Heat frying pan to medium heat and cook chappati for 30–60 seconds on each side. No oil is necessary. Use a dry pan.

Tip

Use your water-bottle to roll out the chappatis. The flat base of a pot or lid is an ideal rolling surface.

DESSERT

I find that by the time I have cooked the main meal I don't have the energy to whip up a dessert. However, there are times when a little sweet something is needed to complete the meal. So here are just a few sweets for that finishing touch.

CARAMEL BANANAS

- 2 bananas, sliced
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup water

Bring the sugar and water to the boil, then simmer until it thickens and changes colour. Add bananas and stir until they are heated through.

Serve with cream or custard (if available).

Tip

Custard powder makes up a tasty custard for desserts. Cream is available in small Tetra (long-life) packs. Condensed milk is another good substitute.

STEWED FRUIT

This is the same as the breakfast recipe. Serve with custard or cream.

POLENTA CUSTARD

- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 tbsp polenta
- a little extra milk

Blend the polenta with enough milk to form a paste. Heat the rest of the ingredients and the polenta mixture. Stir until boiling. Serve hot or cold.

Tip

Milk powder can be used. Make up enough before beginning to cook the rest of the meal.

CREAMED RICE

- 1/2 cup quick-cooking rice
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp brown sugar

Simmer rice, sugar and milk over a low heat until most of the milk is absorbed. Stir frequently to avoid sticking. Stir in honey and allow to stand for a few minutes.

Tip

Make up the milk powder first.

CLEANING UP

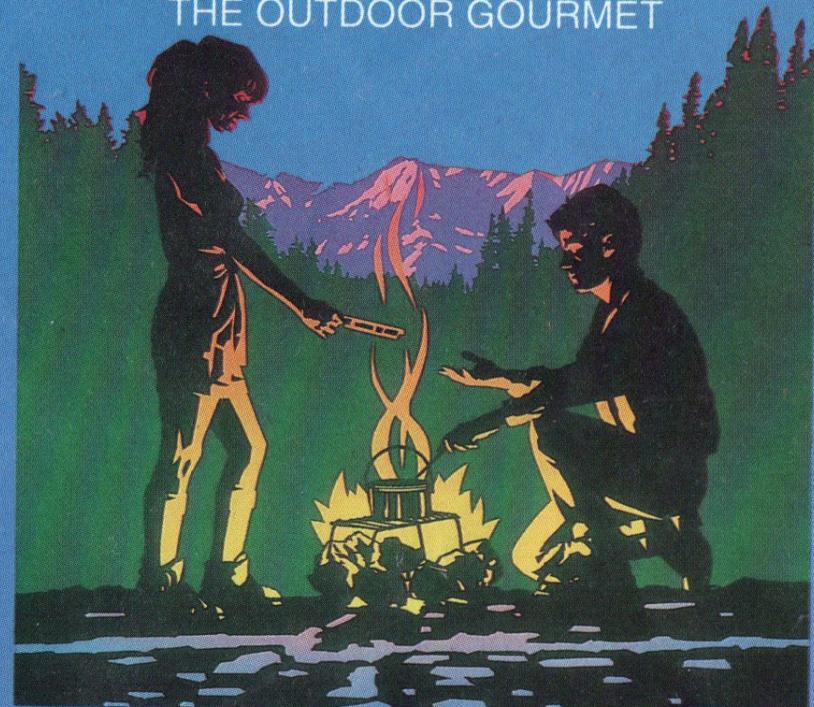
Just a quick word about cleaning up. This is a chore that no one really likes to do but it is an essential part of good hygiene. I always try to clean up as much as I can as I go along. This saves being faced with a big job at the end and helps to avoid running out of utensils while cooking. Always pour some water into the empty pot when you have finished serving and heat it

a little to make washing easier. If you have managed not to burn anything you should be able to clean the pot without too much elbow-grease. However, if the pot has caught it is easiest to soak it overnight. A sponge with a scourer on one side is best for cleaning pots and utensils. Heat the washing-up water in the pot you have used to cook the pasta or rice. Once the chores have been done you can sit back and relax with a nice, hot cuppa.

Please remember to take your rubbish home with you—you were able to bring it in so you are capable of taking it out again. Carry it out in the plastic bag you used for your food on the way in, or pack a separate bag just for this purpose—it weighs next to nothing!

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